

**LEADERSHIP CHALLENGE:
BLENDING INCLUSIVE SPECIAL NEEDS PROVISION AND REFORM OF
TEACHING METHODOLOGY IN A DUTCH INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL**

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This article presents a case study of a state-funded international school in the Netherlands undertaking program reform. During the school year examined by the case study, the school was in the process of promoting the inclusion of children with special needs into its mixed ability classes, and diversifying and improving teaching and learning methodologies for all students. The study demonstrates how decisions made and implemented by the school leader and administration established a climate of inclusion, which aided program reform efforts that were focused on teaching methodologies.

Special Needs Provision

Small international schools around the world will, at some point in their development, be required to define policy and procedures with regard to the admittance and support of students requiring help over and above that given in mainstream classrooms. Most national education systems mandate the type and amount of help a student will receive and support these requirements with funding and the opportunity to utilize local community resources. However, international schools, including those linked to the state system as in the Netherlands or Sweden, find themselves in a less well-defined situation. The schools exist to provide an education, usually in English, to a population that includes expatriates of many different nationalities. Most of these schools anticipate providing additional language help to non-English speaking students. The degree of support that will be offered to students needing special help with the academic or social environment of the international school becomes an issue of debate at the school leadership level.

The burden of policymaking concerning the admission and provision for students requiring learning support falls to the school board and is usually dependent on the advice of the leader of the school administrative team. The administration team then develops procedures to guide current practice. However, even when policy is designed to allow for flexible procedures, administrators will frequently find themselves making decisions about admissions and the operation of the student support program on an annual basis, or as issues appear. These decisions are guided as much by the reality of the school's financial and human resources at any given time as by current research about effective practice. Many international schools with limited resources have built learning support into their programs as they have expanded and as needs require and resources allow.

Attitudes to Inclusion

Personal experience in school administrator in international schools worldwide, together with research that has been undertaken in national education systems particularly in the USA, both suggest that there are variables that will predispose a school to making choices for inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream classrooms. Foremost amongst these are the attitudes of administrators and teachers. Several studies undertaken in the USA have examined degrees of inclusion from this perspective (Cook et al. 1999a, 199b, 2000; Lipsky & Gartner, 2000; Wade, 2000). A study of teachers found that 75% of those surveyed did not believe the inclusion of children with special needs in their classrooms would succeed (Monahan, et. al., 1996). Two studies noted differences in perceptions of the potential success of inclusive policies and practice between teachers and administrators. A survey of principals indicated that they believed inclusion was appropriate for children with mild disabilities but that they perceived teachers as being reluctant to implement inclusion practices (Barnett, & Monda-Amaya, 1998). A second survey of teacher and administrator attitudes confirmed the positive attitudes of principals to the inclusion of children with mild

disabilities, while noting that teachers did not feel that placement of children with special needs in mainstream classrooms improved the student's academic performance (Cook, et al., 2000).

Leadership and Inclusion

The inclination of school leaders to create a climate favorable to inclusion stands out as another important variable when schools have choices regarding how they treat children with special needs. Hasazi, et. al., (1996) noted, *How leadership at each school site chose to look at the least restrictive environment [for students with special needs] was critical to how, or even whether, much would be accomplished beyond the status quo* (p.492). Studies that examined the school organizational environment for variables related to successful inclusion, pinpointed the need for building-level administrators to articulate the vision, the expected professional behavior, and the course of action that will be used to implement inclusion practices, while modeling the collaborative practices necessary themselves (Villa, et. al., 1996; Villa & Thousand, 2003). Principals in Israeli elementary schools implementing successful inclusion policies provided a clear vision of inclusion for their teachers (Avisar, et. al., 2003).

Models for Inclusion

While there is general agreement on the crucial role of school leadership for building a climate of inclusion, commentators differ as to whether the development of a specific model for an inclusive program for students with special needs is possible given the variation in school environments. Kusuma-Powell and Powell (2000) argued that inclusion is a *state of mind, not a prescription for program development* (p.221). Wheatley (1994), discussing organizational change noted, *I no longer believe that organizations can be changed by imposing a model developed elsewhere. So little transfers, or even inspires, those trying to work at change in their own organizations.* (pp.7-8). This stance was endorsed by Kusuma-Powell and Powell (2000) who noted *it is important to recognize that there is no single model, no single program, format or service delivery method that will serve as an answer to all possible situations* (p.18).

American schools overseas were encouraged to develop their own models or responses to special needs students by the United States Department of State Office of Overseas Schools, but there was no direct recommendation that these be models of inclusion. Other researchers working from studies of specific schools proposed models for special needs requiring the working through of a series of stages. Gale (2000) based her model on experiences with the development of a program over five years in an international school in South Africa. Haldiman and Hollington (2003) proposed a similar six stage model that includes policy making (encompassing mission, admission and enrolment policies), organizational infrastructure development, assessment and identification of students, program delivery and accountability, parent-school relationships, and evaluation.

Identifying Special Needs in International Schools

It can be argued that, by definition, all expatriate children enrolled in international schools are *special* and need some kind of support. For these children, cross-cultural differences both in the school and its wider community (mother tongue language use, movement between different curriculum and assessment models) are the norm. Most international schools recognize the need to develop a school climate and environment that has the flexibility to accommodate and provide for these needs. The schools recognize that for many of their students a lack of fluency in the host country language excludes them from taking advantage of local sporting and cultural opportunities and the school becomes their social as well as educational center. The school will also be the stage on which emotional problems connected with culture shock, be it that of the student or other family members, will be played out.

Identifying children with special needs given these complicating factors becomes an administrative challenge. There are clearly ethical issues concerning the acceptance of students with special learning needs when the school is uncertain whether these needs can be accommodated in the classroom with existing resources. But often the extent of the support needed does not become apparent until after the family is settled and committed to an employment contract. Learning difficulties stemming in part from multiple moves from one country to another, exposure to a number of languages, and transitions between different school systems adds additional complexity to the picture.

At the administrative level these decisions are further complicated by conflicting views of the child's needs when viewed from different perspectives, one of which must be the alternatives available to the family. International schools frequently represent the only educational option for expatriate families.

Where employment, and hence the well being of the entire family, hinge on children being accepted into the one school in the locality that can provide a familiar pattern of education, families may be reluctant to reveal past educational or emotional problems, and the schools find themselves coping with a wider population of exceptional children

Linking Inclusion to School Reform

Few international schools enjoy the luxury of starting up a learning support unit from scratch; most programs evolve as resources become available and the school climate supports their use. Many schools have admission statements that may actively discourage the enrollment of students who will require additional support. Only when schools are forced to confront the issue do they reexamine both their policies and the organization of existing resources, and adjust and enhance what exists while making plans for the future. They may be forced to do this in response to pressure from local constituents who wish the school to adopt more inclusive policies, or from teachers who believe students already enrolled in the school need additional support. Reviewing special needs provision may also come as a result of the adoption of a new program or a desire to reform an existing program.

For international schools with visionary leaders planning new program adoption or reform, the literature suggests that special services offer rich and varied possibilities (Doyle, 2001; Gartner, & Lipsky, 2000; Giangreco, et. al., 2002; Hollington, 1994; Haldimann, 1998). Both specialist and mainstream classroom teachers have specialist methodological knowledge. Specialist teachers offer experience in writing goals, objectives, individual learning styles, assistive technology, modifying content and utilizing community-based services, while mainstream teachers may use heterogeneous grouping, interdisciplinary teaching units, co-teaching, cooperative learning strategies and peer-tutoring. Integrating special services with regular education spreads their benefits from only selected individuals to all students as teachers become focused on individual student goals rather than group outcomes. *Viewing special services from an integrated perspective provides numerous opportunities for visionary leaders to create new ways to deliver services so that they are focused on instructional goals for all students* (Doyle, 2003, p.288).

Method

This within-site case study was conducted using qualitative research methods, combining elements of historical organizational and situation analysis research. Both authors of this study were actively involved in the events at the school for the second year of the study. One was the substitute assistant principal with responsibility for program and student affairs. The other researcher was a host country national, fluent in English language and a professional child psychologist specializing in adolescents, working at the school as a part-time consultant with responsibility for students experiencing learning problems.

The administrator/researcher attended and participated in all meetings in the school that had any bearing on the case study, other than parent meetings with individual teachers and specialists. These included meetings of the administrative team to discuss policy issues, meetings with the teacher leaders of each grade level when students of concern were discussed, meetings with the student services team (consultant and councilor) to discuss student referrals, and meetings with local specialists invited to the school. In addition, she interacted with the students discussed in the study on a daily basis, in the classroom substituting teaching or observing lessons, and attending special events and field trips with them. The psychologist/researcher also met with the councilor, undertook in-class observations and individual meetings with the students, met with individual teachers to discuss students, and with specialists in the local community in the process of searching for resources for the school.

There was no consultation between the researchers regarding analysis of the situation described in the article until the end of the school year. Both were active participants in the events at the school. Both researchers were involved in informal conversations with students, teachers and other members of the school community and, by the end of the school year, had an instinctive feel for both the way the school and individual students and teachers operated. However, the historical analysis of the events of the year are based school documents (meeting notes and minutes) which provide a clear record of decisions taken, by whom, and the rationale behind them, and indicate the different perspectives and concerns of groups within the school.

*The Case Study**The School*

The study took place in an international secondary school in the Netherlands, one of several attached to local authority schools in response to a desire by the national government to meet the needs of children of foreigners employed there and nationals who have returned from working abroad or who are intending to go abroad. The language of instruction is English. The school is publicly funded in the same way as local secondary schools but parents pay a *top up* fee to cover the *international* aspects of the school that differentiate it from national secondary schools— in particular the employment of expatriate teachers of a number of different nationalities, and the fees associated with authorization/accreditation of its programs by international agencies. The school had approximately 300 students aged 11 to 18 during the period of the study, following the curriculum of the International Baccalaureate Organization's (IBO) Middle Years Programme (MYP) and Diploma Program (DP). The children represented approximately 25 different nationalities, many of them held dual nationality, and all had experienced education in other international schools or national systems other than that of their host country.

Start of the Year Review

At the start of the 2003-4 school year, time was set aside in a weekly administrative meeting to review the school's stance in general terms on provision of support to students identified by teachers as requiring help to function in the school. This was in response to several stimuli, as well as providing an opportunity to brief two new members of the administrative team to the issues perceived to surround this area of the school's functioning. The issues of diversifying teaching methodology and special needs provision were both agenda items.

Diversifying Teaching Methodology

At the end of the previous school year, visits by both the national school inspectorate and an IBO MYP team had drawn attention to a lack of diversity of teaching methods employed in the school, and the consequential lack of differentiated learning opportunities in the mixed ability classes. The school was required by both organizations to provide evidence that it had addressed this issue by the end of the 2003-4 school year.

Discussions between administrators and teachers established a timetable of workshops reviewing teaching techniques, class visits by administrators and peers to provide teachers with informal feedback on teaching methods, and a commitment by a group of teachers to have their lessons videotaped for viewing and discussion in their subject-area meetings. In addition, teachers submitted teaching modules to the IBO for comment on the opportunities each unit offered for differentiated learning and self assessment.

Examining Special Needs Provision

The school was also in the process of applying for accreditation by the European Council of International Schools (ECIS/CIS), and to do this the school needed a clear policy regarding the admission and support of students deemed to have special needs that reflected the overall mission and philosophy of the school. The school shared a mission statement with the local school group of which it was a part for administrative purposes, and had not been involved in the framing process. The mission statement read:

Our aim is to offer high-quality education that places emphasis on fostering stimulating subject content, diverse and dynamic teaching, a good school climate, creativity. And to prepare students for further education.

We aim to help our students to grow into responsible human beings who are able to function well both individually and in a team, in a multiform and multicultural society.

The organization is a public institution, open to anyone who respects the ideology and religious beliefs of others, and who can benefit from one of the educational forms available in the organization.

The school leadership agreed that the mission statement offered no guidelines to formulating school policy regarding the admittance of children with particular needs. It was noted, however, that the national education system had moved away from special education units within schools towards in-class help for students needing additional support, and reference was made to the 'inclusive' movement in the USA and specific examples of other international schools' responses to similar situations. The head of school made it clear that his vision of the school was one of inclusion, and he was clearly supportive of making places available for all students applying to the school. He acknowledged that his beliefs were both philosophical and pragmatic – there were a number of 'captive families' in the school community working for a US military base, and a large international corporation, both of which had been supportive of the school.

However, the two program leaders expressed reservations about an inclusive policy, and moved the discussion to consider examples of individual students. The DP leader requested that thought be given to the effects of a school-wide inclusive policy on the pre-college program that was highly academic and geared to external examinations. If all students were allowed to attempt the program, he argued, regardless of teacher's predilections that they would 'drop out' or fail the examinations, the school's credibility for preparing students for college could be called into question. .

The program leader for the MYP used the case of a student in the school to discuss the implications of a clearly articulated inclusion policy. The student, B, a British national, had been admitted to the local international primary school the previous year, aged 10. He was of high intelligence (PIQ=138) with a very supportive family who had relocated because of the father's employment at a high level in a multinational in the town. His parents had warned the school that B had found it difficult to cope in classrooms, and had symptoms suggesting Aspergers Syndrome, although the frequent international moves by the family had meant that he had never been referred for a diagnosis prior to the move to the Netherlands. Special Needs (SN) teachers at the international elementary school referred B to the local community mental health service for psychological testing, which enabled them to suggest ways in which his classroom teachers could best help him cope with the primary school situation.

B had difficulty empathizing with the feeling and thoughts of others, and in understanding social rules. He focused on details and found it difficult to integrate several separate parts of information into a coherent whole. In the classroom verbal instructions proved a problem, as did noise, and subjects such as art, music and physical education proved too rich in stimuli for B to be able to concentrate. He became overloaded with information and got tired and frustrated. Mathematics, science and information technology classes worked best for him, as he could apply logical reasoning to understand the subject matter. He performed in a school play, and played piano solos in the school concert, as both required a well rehearsed scenario which suited him. At the primary school he received considerable support from the SN teachers and was in a sheltered classroom situation with a clearly defined routine. He performed well academically.

B had been admitted automatically into the secondary school with his primary school peers on reaching 11 years of age, for although his problems were well known, the admissions policy did not exclude him from the school and his father did not wish to jeopardize his career by returning to the UK. There were other options, but the family did not want to consider boarding school for B, and the family could not place their son in a local school where a range of services would have been available to him, because he could not speak Dutch.

On B's arrival at the secondary school, his parents and the school pooled financial resources to hire a US child psychologist for a limited number of hours a week to help observe the boy in school and provide advice to him, his parents and his teachers as how best to maintain an acceptable level of behavior in school. However, once B encountered the very different routine of the secondary school, where students were moving between classrooms for different classes and subject teachers, noise levels in the lunch room were high, and students were being trained to become independent learners, his ability to cope rapidly deteriorated.

Teachers, accustomed to the problems of expatriate children adjusting to the school, were initially helpful and supported their instructions with visual or written material as often as possible. However, misunderstanding occurred, which would lead to frustration and anger on B's part that he was unable to deal with in an acceptable way. B would shout in the classroom, throw objects on the floor, hurt himself and occasionally others. This was very disruptive for the class, and B would often have to leave. A typical scenario was documented by his science teacher in a note to the grade-level team meeting:

B was working in a group with two other students undertaking a science experiment with a measuring cylinder. One of the students accidentally spilled water over B's notebook. B. shouted at him, called him an imbecile several times and had to be removed from class. The other student was very embarrassed and did not know what to do, and did not want to continue the experiment.

By the end of the 2002-3 school year it was obvious to everyone that the situation was unworkable and that new measures would have to be taken both to improve B's learning experience and to ensure he was less disruptive to the learning of his classmates. Parents had asked to have their children moved out of the classes B attended, and teachers were reluctant to take classes with him. The school had to make the decision as to whether it could retain B, and under what conditions.

From conversations with the class and his teachers, it was clear that as a person B was well liked, students were for the most part tolerant of his problems and included him in activities. He had a sibling at the school who was doing well, and his parents could be called upon at any time to help with school activities and events. The program coordinator and the Assistant Principal, on whom the

responsibility had fallen for 'calming B down' when there had been an incident in the classroom, were still willing to persevere with the inclusion policy, applying their experiences of what worked and what did not to develop a more productive situation for the coming year.

By the start of the 2003-4 school year, a limited timetable had been negotiated for B. His mother had agreed to hire another expatriate parent to sit with him in many of his classes remind him of the steps he was being trained to take when he found himself becoming frustrated or upset. B was offered a spot in the school, close to the administrators' offices where he could go when he needed to calm down or eat his lunch on his own if the noise in the school canteen proved too much for him.

As the program coordinator outlined the measures that would operate with B for the year, she could not predict if they would be successful in improving B's experience in the school, or in satisfying parent and teacher concerns. She also noted the amount of administrative time involved in supervising B, and that both she and the assistant principal would be required to work with teachers on the issue of addressing the need for more diversity in teaching methodology to meet the requirements of inspectorate, authorization and accreditation agencies. In addition to student B, she noted that the teachers believed there were a number of other students in need of support, some with a previous record of help in other schools, some without, who were receiving no special assistance from the school, about whom the teachers perceived they needed guidance.

Deciding to Provide a Learning Support Consultant

Faced with this situation, and the recently received news that the US consultant that had been hired to assist with B had returned to the States to live, the school principal undertook to find the funds to support the hiring of a part-time student learning support person, a decision noted in the minutes of the meeting. This was a considerable commitment. As the school was fully staffed, additional funding for special needs help would only come through the local authority and would not be available for the employment of non-nationals if nationals could be found to fill the position. This decision would also be questioned by the local authorities who would argue that such resource people were available to the school through their offices. Within the following month the position was advertised, and the two applicants were interviewed.

Developing a Job Description

One of the applicants was a young Dutch psychologist living locally who had recently graduated from a local university, and who had experience with working with adolescents in addition to having excellent spoken English. The school was only able to find funding to employ her three days a week in a special arrangement as a Student Support Consultant (SSC) rather than as a member of the teaching staff. It was important to establish a job description for her. Principal, Assistant Principal and Middle Years Program leader made it clear to the teachers that she was to be a resource for individualizing class instruction for students needing it, and as such would be helping the school move towards more varied and child-centered teaching methodology, and not the withdrawal of children from mainstream classrooms. Discussions with the teachers who acted as tutors at each grade level and who met once a week with the assistant principal to discuss students of concern amongst other things, established a set of procedures wherein the team would act as a referral source to the LSC, having previously collected information about students from subject teachers. There was limited office space in the school, but the teacher who acted as a part-time counselor to students with emotional needs, agreed to share an office and adjust her timetable to allow for student interviews in it.

Identification of Students Needing Support

The initial problem for the school to cope with was that of student B. During the first month of her employment, the LSC met with his teachers, undertook classroom observations, and met with B. She also reviewed ways of allowing B's parents to access local funding for additional help, and in the process, catalogued the facilities the school could get access to for future special needs cases. The extra funding that the family was able to obtain was used for use provision of extra in-classroom support by another part time expatriate teacher at the school, with whom B had developed a rapport. Working with the MYP coordinator, the LSC decided on the following measures. B's schedule was adjusted to shorten and hence make his days less stressful (he was scheduled for 22 out of 35 lessons per week, of which 19 were with his mixed ability class.) Individual in-class support was provided for 13 of the 19 hours B spend in class. The purpose of the in-classroom support was to intervene in situations that developed before they got out of hand, so B would not experience so much frustration, classes were disrupted less and B was given an opportunity to develop self-managing skills.

In addition the extra funding was used to provide two hours with individual mathematics with a school math teacher and one hour of counseling with the learning support consultant that the school could not otherwise have provided. In the counseling session, the consultant was able to discuss the incidents of the last week with B, providing him with other behavior options in similar situations when they arose in the future, and preparing him for upcoming events that were different from the regular schedule and hence would cause B stress.

The learning support consultant also coordinated the in-classroom support, providing guidelines and goals to work towards. For extra-curricular events, she communicated with the year tutor, teachers and B's parents to decide whether B could participate (for example, the four night outdoor activity camp) and if so, what measures needed to be taken to make things run smoothly.

As this plan was set up and implemented, the administration noted that there might be opposition from some teachers to having both a parent and another colleague in their classes. Some teachers had been 'sounded out' about this informally, and there were certainly concerns. The LSC and the two adults were warned of this, and discussed ways of developing a trust situation. However, after a few weeks of operating the new arrangements with B, the feedback from the teachers was clearly positive – the improved class climate and the shared responsibility for ensuring B could cope with classroom activities clearly offset any concerns that classroom practice was being 'spied on'.

Other Students

Throughout the first term of the school year other students were identified as needing help through the agreed procedures of referral by teachers to the year tutors, who would bring the student of concern forward for discussion at the weekly tutor meeting and then referral to the LSC. By mid year the LSC had a caseload of twelve students, between two and four in each of the four grades of the middle school program. She had observed each student in the classroom, and liaised with the tutor for the year group, who passed advice and information about the student back to subject teachers.

These students included the following: GW (British), who loved school but lacked concentration and was extremely disorganized – as had been an elder sibling at the same age; DO (Turkish), having problems with language comprehension, and with social participation in cooperative learning situations; KF (American), with organizational problems and who was suspected of having an attention deficit disorder; MF(American), very shy and rarely spoke or participated in class; JJ (America), with attention and organization difficulties – the result of, or compounded by an epileptic condition; MK (Egyptian), thought to have a learning problem as indicated by poor command of English even after a long period of intensive English help; GW(UK), with limited skills in communicating thoughts on paper together with poor interpersonal skills, and NH (Dutch), an academically weak student with organization problems believed to be compounded by lack of single mother tongue.

Policy for Admissions Needing Learning Support

By the half way point in the school year, with learning support procedures in place in mainstream classrooms and operating well, the question of admissions for the following year came to the fore. The school started the procedures of screening students from its main feeder Primary School, also an international school, as well as from an elementary school operated by a US military base nearby, in addition to incoming independent applications. It was clear that there were at least six students applying for places who were currently receiving learning support in their schools.

The group included JF, a student with severe dyslexia. JF had attended a special boarding school in the UK for less than a year. Her mother, who was English, had a partner and a new family in the area close to the school, and was having problems coping with the new environment. JF's father had moved to Scandinavia. Thus there was no possibility of JF returning to the UK or of family funding the special school. The UK school that JF had attended had advised that she should be taught only in English. The international primary schools she was currently attending had testing results that indicated an average IQ, but severe difficulties in demonstrating this in class.

Also in the group was SJ, whose verbal abilities were much higher than his performance abilities and had difficulties on the social-emotional level. When stressed he lost his temper and "flew off the handle" over the smallest things. He got angry and aggressive and needed to be taken out of class. KS, another of the students, had a bipolar disorder and was receiving help for three days a week from a tutor with him in class.

Developing an Admissions Policy

Warning of these prospective admission problems was brought to the administrative team who considered the issues involved at one of its weekly meetings in late January. There was general agreement that it was time to attempt the writing of an admissions policy, although there was a clear understanding among all the experienced administrators present that doing so was unlikely to make any of the individual decisions about admissions any easier. It would, however, be an opportunity to articulate the thinking that had guided the school's actions regarding inclusion.

The first draft, framed by the school's head administrator, noted that the program in the first two years of the school was designed to be accessible to children from a broad range of ability, which the last two years, the International Baccalaureate Diploma, was designed as an academic course for university entrance. It went on to note:

The school strives to serve children with a wide range of needs, but is limited by the level of government funding as to the special support service that it can offer. The school only accepts

children whom it believes are able to benefit from the program offered by the school, and will discuss on an individual basis the admission of children who require specialized support.

As a general guideline, the school is unable to accept:

Children who are unable to read and write, at least in their mother tongue or in another language, to a level approximately appropriate to their age,

Children who have been diagnosed with severe learning difficulties,

Children who require a high level of one-to-one support or supervision,

Children whose behavior may threaten the safety of others or of themselves, or be a significantly disruptive force for others.

The draft was circulated for comment in a full faculty meeting, and was accepted with minimum comment. Informally, teachers also recognized that, given the precedent set having B in the school, it would be difficult to turn away students even if there was a will to do so. The teachers also recognized the difficulties in producing an unambiguous statement.

A similar document was drafted by the coordinator of the Diploma Program. In it, the requirements for entry into the program were no longer linked to test scores, in effect recognizing that the school would initially accept anyone into the program, and would 'counsel out' those who by the end of the first year were obviously unable to cope.

Adopting a Screening Instrument

Given the high turn over of overseas students, the school was also well aware that there would be other applications from newly arriving families before, and after, the start of the school year, often with considerably less documentation of previous school experiences. Current practice was to give these students placement tests in several academic subject areas, but this was generally regarded as providing little information for students arriving from widely different academic and language backgrounds, often disorientated by the move to a new country.

During the latter half of the year, the LS consultant had reviewed the options with regard to screening incoming students for possible needs requiring learning support. Some students would qualify for financial help from the local authority given either to the family to purchase help, or the school to provide help for a particular student. They would, however, have to have a recognized learning disability as indicated by standardized testing, and the local authority could supply free testing in the local language, it was not always able to supply testing in the mother tongue of the student requiring it. The LSC was able to locate a private testing organization, linked to a local university, that had a particular interest in 'international testing', who proved efficient and understanding with school families who were prepared to cover the costs of having their child tested.

Another option was for the school to buy a set of the most commonly used diagnostic tests in English – but while the current LS consultant was qualified to administer and interpret these, there was no guarantee that the school would be able to replace her with someone with similar qualifications when she left at the end of the school year.

The LS then discovered that a local university had been developing a screening instrument for research purposes to test for common problems with language development skills, logical reasoning and concentration. The instrument drew on a variety of internationally-recognized tests and had been translated into thirteen different languages. The university suggested that it could be used to provide a student profile specific to the school. This would be of more use for an international school than the national profiles usually used for comparisons with most psychological testing, given the unique characteristics of the school population in terms of the variety of the social and educational backgrounds it contained. The knowledge most useful to the school for guiding admissions decisions was whether a child had a learning profile markedly different from the existing school population. Once the current school profile had been established by testing all the students at the end of the school year, incoming students could be tested as part of the entrance procedures to establish if their skill development fell outside of the range currently found in the mixed ability classes in their year group.

The university also offered to provide two graduate students to help with the initial testing for the profile development and give ongoing support as needed. The test was installed on the school computers, and was completed by the students in their mother tongue language or English (students were given the choice). Plans were made for the incoming class to be tested at the beginning of the new school year in September.

Closure

As the school year drew to a close, the school advertised for a replacement for the LSC, and was fortunate to find another local applicant with similar qualifications, allowing for a smooth handover of the program as it had been developed during the year. Student B's family were also returning to the UK, and several other students who had received additional support were relocating. The families of several of the students applying for placement in the school had been warned that the school was unlikely to be able to offer the help they would need and they should explore other

possibilities, although none had been refused admission at that point. The school had received another inspection visit by the program authorizing organization, which had judged the overall progress made towards diversifying teaching methods to be satisfactory.

Discussion

A number of points emerge from reflection on the events of the school year from both the perspective of reform and diversification of teaching methods, and of the development of a clearly articulated policy with regard to students with special needs.

1. The clearly articulated stance of the leadership of the school on the inclusion and provision of appropriate learning opportunities for special needs students was a crucial factor in the acceptance of this inclusive school climate. Once it was clear that a potentially disruptive child would be attending classes, teachers began to focus on how to incorporate the child successfully in the class. At this point the willingness of the school leadership to facilitate a range of support methods for child and teacher further aided the process.
2. The development of an 'inclusive' teacher mindset towards students with special needs – the willingness to accept, retain and integrate students rather than label them and turn them away, was helped by the international aspect of the school. Teachers were accustomed to the complications of effective assessment on the arrival of expatriate students from diverse backgrounds that built up a more tolerant approach to accepting students.
3. The formal diagnosis of a particular student's learning problems was only marginally helpful to this school; observation, discussion with the child and parents, and teacher group discussions provided the most useful information regarding effective teaching methods, which again focused attention on delivery of the program in the classroom, rather than in a 'special needs' department.
4. The need to respond to the requirements of the IBO and national inspectorate created a situation where teachers/administrators were discussing teaching strategies and developing ways to examine their own classroom practice. This focused attention on the need to cater for a diversity of learning needs in the classroom, rather than the problems one child might be having with regard to established classroom practice.
5. The provision of adults to 'shadow' B in the classroom and the SLC's visits to the classrooms to observe students identified by teachers as needing additional help, contributed to the process of 'opening up' the classrooms. Teachers became less fearful of having other adults in their classrooms interacting with students, and the interaction was easiest when teachers were employing methods being advocated to improve student learning such as group activities, discussions, and independent research. This played into teacher willingness to have model lessons video taped for discussion and allow peer observations.
6. The 'success' of the inclusion process at the middle school level prompted of a reconsideration of practices in other areas of the school, including the selection for the pre-college course and the three-month pull out program for non-English language speakers.
7. The willingness of the school leader to consider the creative use of school and community resources including finance and space, and to accept an innovative way of approaching the identification of students with special needs in the context of the school undoubtedly facilitated the inclusion process.

In conclusion, this case study illustrates the potential that the interaction between initiatives to incorporate child-centered and more diverse teaching methods into mixed ability classrooms, and the leadership initiative to include students with a range of special needs into the mixed ability classrooms produced a school environment friendlier to all students.

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